THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. II. October 2, 1936 Tishri 16, 5697 No. 11

EDITORIALS

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A COORDINATE, NOT COORDINATING, BODY

COMMUNISM EVOLVING

THE MARXIST HARE AND A MAD TEA PARTY

by Marvin B. Gelber

THE JEWISH TEACHER AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

by Israel S. Chipkin

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EDITORIALS

Prepare For Protest!

THE murder, the arson and the pillage of the Arab terrorists in Palestine during the past few months have been destructive of more than life and property in that land. They have done serious damage to the morale of Jews throughout the world. Those who had a deep faith in the Zionist vision must in many instances have felt that faith shaken. Those who were on the point of being won over to an understanding of the significance of Zionism must in numerous cases have been repelled from that endeavor. It is important, therefore, for every Jew to weigh again, first, the validity of the objectives that Zionism envisages and, secondly, the practical possibility of effecting them.

Have the Arab terrorists invalidated the Zionist dream? A careful examination of the Jewish situation today will reveal at once that the goals of Zionist effort are as worth while as they ever were. There is still, as there was six months ago, a burning need for a haven of refuge for thousands of Jews who cannot stay where they are, and who have no place to which to turn except Palestine. The internal life of world Jewry demands now, as it did before the outbreak of the Arab attack, a center in which Judaism, serving as the primary civilization of a body of Jews, shall take on new life. The rebuilding of Palestine is still necessary for the self-respect and the self-esteem of Jews throughout the world. The physical need, the cultural need and the emotional need still persist.

Has Zionism harmed the Arab? Has it been revealed as a movement which in practice runs counter to a decent concern for the rights of others? The rise in the standard of Arab living, the increase in the Arab population, the prosperity of Palestine in sharp contrast to the poverty of Trans-Jordania and Syria, the immigration of Arabs into Palestine—all these demonstrate that the Jew is fulfilling his purposes in that land without harm to the basic interests of the Arabs. It is significant that the Arab agitators today do not, as they did in 1929, claim as the reason for their violence the expropriation of the Arab people. The Zionist case is ethically as unimpeachable as it has ever been.

The purposes of Zionism have real significance, their realization has involved no infringement of the rights of others. Has the Zionist program been revealed as impossible of execution? Has irreparable damage been inflicted on Jewish Palestine? The toll of lives has been high. The loss of property has been extensive. But what has happened has not been without salutary effect. It has elicited from Palestinian Jewry a remarkable demonstration of courage and discipline. In the face of brutal attack the Jew in Erez Yisrael has persisted unmoved. In the teeth of wanton savage provocation the

Jews of Palestine have obeyed orders and made no attempt at retaliation. There are even physical benefits that have emerged. The new harbor at Tel Aviv is one such. The stimulus to certain agricultural activities as a result of the Arab strike is another. The very demonstration that Jewish Palestine could not be shaken or dislodged by terrorism is reassuring both to Jews in Palestine and outside. But the greatest good that has emerged is the recognition that the Jew can no longer avoid the realities of his relationship with the Arabs. Until recently it was the fashion either to disregard the Arab problem, or to think wishfully about it. Jewry in Palestine and outside it now recognize that the Arab problem is one that cannot be evaded. It is not sufficient to have avoided harming the Arab or to have benefitted him positively. What is needed is a careful scientific study of the complicated relationships of the two groups, a persistent effort to establish points of friendly cooperation between them and the undertaking on the part of Jews of a sustained campaign to offset the bigoted agitation in which Arab leadership has indulged.

The British government as usual has followed the policy of muddling through. For months it allowed the terror to continue with but feeble attempts to check it. The bombing of Jewish schools and the shooting of nurses called forth very little beyond expressions of regret on the part of the administrative authorities. Now, belatedly, the British government, having discovered that it is dealing as much with an attack against its own authority as upon Jews, promises to deal with a firmer hand. Despite this reassuring news and despite the repeated promise of British officialdom that there will be no suspension of immigration, the Jewish world must be prepared for what may ensue. The persistent rumors that entrance into Palestine will be forbidden to Jews are by no means dispelled. The Zionist Organization has already begun to rally Jewish and Gentile opinion against such a contingency. The time may again come as it did in 1929 when mass protest may be necessary. We ask our readers to hold themselves in readiness, to be prepared to give financial and moral assistance should a vacillating Colonial Office decide that Arab bombs can best be quieted at the cost of Jewish hopes and ideals.

The work must continue. Jews in Palestine have demonstrated their firm footing in the land. They have earned by their courage under danger the right to complete support and the strengthening knowledge that their numbers will be increased. The needs to which Palestine answers are as real now as they ever have been. The case of the Jew is beyond reproach ethically. There is neither reason nor right in yielding to brute violence.

At the present moment the tragic situation in Palestine looms large. The difficulties in 1921 and 1929 loomed equally large. What is happening in Palestine now is, against the long range of Jewish history, but another sortie of the Samaritans against the rebuilders of ancient Zion. The time will yet come, if we but will it, when generations still unborn will read of the events of 1936 with the same sense of their transient importance as we read of those in the time of Nehemiah.

A Coordinate, Not Coordinating, Body

APPROXIMATELY 300 delegates from 32 countries attended the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, from August 8th to 16th. Those delegates who could talk up without fear of reprisals from the authorities in their respective countries retold the heartbreaking story of Jewish suffering. Officers were elected, a budget of $75,000 was adopted for the maintenance of the organization, a number of commissions were created, and plans were laid for the establishment of a permanent body.

The leaders of the Congress are to be commended for their candor in stating that the organization was not representative of the whole Jewish people. Unfortunately, they did not go far enough in clarifying to themselves or to the world

the precise character of their position. In declaring that they were not representative of all Jewry, they implied that this circumstance was to be regarded by them as a temporary one. Indeed, before the convention had come to a close, the explicit hope was expressed that eventually all elements in Jewry might enlist under the banner of the Congress. We believe that the condition of their partial representation must inevitably be a permanent one.

The very constituency of the Congress revealed that there is an element in present-day Jewry which simply cannot be represented by the existing relief and negotiatory agencies. These agencies are, for historical reasons, predominantly German-Jewish in constituency, and on the whole, they represent a level of economic power occupied by the few rather than the many. There are very few Eastern-European Jews on the councils of these agencies; in fact, they are conspicuous by their absence. No one is to blame for this condition. Undoubtedly, German-Jews, like other Jews, are most at home with their own *landsleute*. After all, the whole system of *landsmanschaften* is sustained by the tendency to perpetuate provincialisms.

As a result, a large body of Jews remain, with a capacity for leadership and a yearning for self-expression, who find no channel for their talents. For such Jews, there is undoubtedly a place in Jewish life, and the leaders of the Congress have done well to organize an agency which would be representative of these elements. They not only have the right so to organize; the character of existing agencies has rendered their actions necessary.

But the leaders of the Congress should bear in mind that the unit of Jewish organization which they have brought into being must be coordinate with other Jewish organizations. It cannot become a coordinating organization. They have as little chance of coordinating the work of existing agencies as those organizations had of absorbing the Jews who are represented by the Congress. For that reason, it is quixotic for the Congress to attempt to become eventuallly *the* one Jewish agency for the Jews of the diaspora. Once again we are compelled to remind the Congress leaders that it is futile to try to create a truly representative Jewish body without building firmly from the bottom up. Local Jewish communities must first be organized, communities which are free from the limitations of *landsmanschaften,* communities which are representative of all the Jews in any locale. When this has been accomplished, national bodies, representative of these communities, can be set up. Until then, it is meaningless to speak of a World Jewish Congress in the true sense of the word. We are quite prepared to concede that the establishment of a real World Jewish Congress is still a long way off; it will probably take another generation before the various European origins cease to make a difference and provincialism is liquidated. So long, therefore, as the chances of creating a unified and representative body for world Jewry are remote, the present Congress should approach its task from the point of view of the practical benefits that may derive from the unification of the at-present unorganized and unrepresented masses outside the existing organizations.

Such an approach implies that the Congress must concern itself with more than the maintenance of its own structure. A budget should be adopted which takes into consideration the needs of unfortunate Jews. The obligation which such a budget would involve would require the creation of a fund through which the Jewish masses might be given an opportunity to express, in concrete terms, their sense of responsibility for fellow Jews. When the Zionist movement began, Dr. Herzl realized very clearly that the tasks he set the Jewish world had to be presented to it simultaneously with the instruments for achieving those tasks. That is why the Jewish Colonial Trust and the Jewish National Fund were both created at the very outset of the movement. Reports indicate that the suggestion to establish a

similar instrument, in the form of a bank, was actually made; it is regrettable that the Congress did not see fit to act upon that suggestion.

If the Congress proceeds in the direction which it took in Geneva, it must degenerate into an abortive effort to achieve the impossible. If, however, the Congress conceives of itself as a body coordinate with other Jewish organizations, dedicated to the amelioration of the conditions of oppressed Jews and to the crystallization of liquid Jewish forces, it will have a legitimate function to perform.

Communism Evolving

THE execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev and the other Trotzkyites is the clearest vindication of democracy and the most vivid demonstration of the dangers of bureaucracy. The atmosphere of conspiracy and terrorism is generated by party dictatorship, and minority leadership that under a democratic regime would find an outlet in open opposition, degenerates into underworld plotting against the lives of those in authority.

In addition, however, these executions indicate that the development of Russia along nationalist lines is definitely assured. At heart, the issue between Stalin and Trotzky has been the clash between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Trotzky conceives of Communism in cosmopolitan terms. According to his philosophy, a revolution, to be effective, must be world-wide; Russia, therefore, must serve as a base from which the revolutionary armies shall operate throughout the world "until the international Soviet shall be the human race." According to Stalin, socialism can be built in a single country. Hence, for the moment, Russia becomes the revolution incarnate; the defense of the Soviet Union must take precedence over all else, even, at times, the needs of the revolutionary forces abroad. Stalin's thesis synthesizes nationalism with Communism, and it is from this thesis that all the compromises of the recent policies of Soviet Russia have flowed: the entrance into the League of Nations, the Franco-Soviet pact, the sale of oil for Mussolini's armies in Ethiopia, and now the "neutrality" in the Spanish civil war. Hereafter, the revolutionary forces of the world may perhaps find in Russia an inspiration, but not an active ally.

The most interesting implication of the triumph of Stalinism is the fact that it affords a great opportunity for the continuance of Jewish life. The nationalism of Stalin has encouraged the fostering of the nationalisms of all national groups within the borders of the Soviet Union. In consonance with this policy, Russian Jewry has been given the opportunity to foster their own national culture. To give that culture a territorial base, a Jewish republic is now being built in Biro-Bidjan.

But despite the eagerness of the government to foster Jewish cultural life, the Jewish communists do everything in their power to sabotage it and to hasten the process of assimilation. They insist upon being more Catholic than the Pope; while many non-Jewish officials in Biro-Bidjan have learned to speak Yiddish and even to deliver public addresses in Yiddish, the *Jewish officials* have tried to suppress the use of Yiddish, and it was only the intervention of the Moscow *Emes* that has put a stop to the Russification of Biro-Bidjan. Bourgeois assimilationism has been repudiated; but Red assimilationism still flourishes.

In the new and evolving Communism, there is a real opportunity for some kind of Jewish life. If Jewish life disappears in Russia, Communism will not be to blame. The Jewish communists themselves will have killed it.

The Marxist Hare and A Mad Tea Party

By MARVIN B. GELBER*

> Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to her to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. "I don't quite understand you," she said, as politely as she could. "The Dormouse is asleep again," said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea upon its nose.
>
> —*Alice in Wonderland.*

I

THE summer season was marked by excursions into the realm of Judaica by two radical intellectuals who rather prefer to worship Marx than to understand him. Intellectuals must always be adventurous, but here are two examples where travel in foreign fields has added little to the stature of these seekers after truth. Mr. Earl Browder, who is the mouthpiece of those friends of the Soviet Union who call themselves the Communist Party of the United States, saw fit to give added currency to his ideas on Zionism by committing his oratorical analysis to pamphlet form. Mr. Benjamin Stolberg mounted the tribune of *The Nation,* and modestly entitled his parade of epigrams "The Jew and the World." While our official communist commentator assumes an honest mien, the more imaginative and literary Mr. Stolberg makes the serious error of attempting to be brilliant.

Mr. Browder is of the opinion that Zionism is the bulwark of British imperialism in Palestine. We must grant that this is a legitimate point of view. History may prove that the alliance with Great Britain has been just a blind for reaction, and that the Jewish people would have gained more by supporting pan-Arabism. Nevertheless, the argument for Jewish nationalism which has been so well expressed by Mihail Kalinin, titular head of the Soviet Union, could still remain. Good Jews could become good communists and seek spiritual balm in that meaningless watchword of the Bolshevik night, "Proletarian in content and nationalist in form." In all honesty, Mr. Browder should advocate a united front with the Left Poale Zion and plead for a restoration of the strength of that party in the Soviet Union, where it managed to fight suppression well on into the dawn.

Mr. Browder apparently does not know that the Bolsheviks fought Zionism with great fury even prior to the consummation of the alliance with Great Britain in 1917. It is within quite recent memory that his friends have in truth become the latter-day saints of internationalism. For years they were the apostles of the naive doctrine of cosmopolitanism and only lately, in the crucible of Russian experience, have they extracted the dross from their doctrinaire philosophy. Marx had said that the workingmen of the world have no country, and his disciples waxed ecstatic.

Now, however, that Communism has rejected cosmopolitanism and has adopted the cause of nationalities, it should be possible for the party-faithful to view with favor the vistas of a creative Jewish culture without suffering accusation of adulterous flirtation with reaction. The cause of *Jewish* nationalism ought be at least as holy to proletarian democracy as that of more obscure minorities whose cause the leaders of the Soviet Union see fit to champion.

If communists honestly believe that the peculiar tactic of the Zionist Organization of the World is making of Jewish Palestine a bulwark for capitalist chaos, they have a positive obligation to fight that policy. But the philosophy of Zionism

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stands on its own feet. It represents the spirit of the Jewish cultural renaissance. In a world that is gripped in the fury of the cult of anti-culture, Zionists refuse to ignore the creative possibilities of a rich tradition. The spirit of the Zionist cultural efflorescence may be distasteful to revolutionaries, but theirs should be the compelling obligation to attempt to mold that reawakening from within according to their own pattern. What Mr. Browder's qualifications are to speak with authority on behalf of a national party on the subject of Zionism is not quite clear. Certainly he could not be expected to appreciate the cultural implications of the Zionist movement.

II

It was not gratuitous courtesy that suggested the first remark of this article, that our two radical intellectuals apparently prefer to worship Marx than to understand him. Karl Marx was essentially a dialectician. His brilliant mind was constantly probing and evaluating. That is why he had the honesty to contradict himself. But with all his genius, he was naturally unable to overcome the limitations of the age in which he lived. Marx was no prophet; he was an historical analyst.

Lenin was also a dialectician and that is why, in the spring of 1917, the Bolshevik cohorts thought him mad. The party of Lenin triumphed and during the years of consolidation of power the pedants dominated the intellectual field. But the smashing of the Communist Party in Germany and the subjugation of the working class stimulated a new wave of thinking. And today a new wave of dialectical analysis is sweeping the world of Communism.

During the days of the world war, Lenin expounded certain historical laws as to the nature of imperialist development. The Comintern then labeled Zionism a venture in imperialism, and thereafter all good Marxists were enabled to foretell its history. Lenin pointed out that exploitation of human beings is of the essence of imperialism. It takes the form of landgrabbing and the creation of a native proletariat through the appropriation of their surplus value in production. Thus by definition, the party-faithful can be certain that the Jewish infiltration into Palestine has resulted in driving the Arabs off the land and in lowering the standard of living of the masses. And Mr. Browder is faithful; he says both these things.

Of course, there should be a corollary to this theorem of "advanced" Marxism. It would be naive to consider all mass migrations imperialism, for cases of transplantation of population that are not characterized by landgrabbing and the progressive impoverishment of the masses cannot be considered imperialism.

If Mr. Browder really were a dialectician, he would have examined the complex of factors in the Palestinian situation before holding forth *ex cathedra* upon it. For instance, he would have found that the largest tracts of land that are settled by Jews in Palestine were uninhabited prior to their arrival. Vast wastes have been reclaimed at great sacrifice and are now supporting a most successful experiment in cooperative living. If he is interested in seeing the process of transformation before his own eyes, let him travel to Palestine and stand by the monument of the martyred Trumpeldor and survey the magnificent Hule area. The valley is beautiful but desolate. He will find a small settlement of primitive Arabs with their peculiar water buffaloes. These Arabs are to be given gratis land drained by Jewish labor and paid for by the money of the Jewish National Fund. Mr. Browder will have to find this out for himself, for the official Communist press will not tell him these things.

As for the question of the standard of living of the mass of the people, Mr. Browder is simply fantastic. Someone has no doubt been telling him that the infiltration of capital leads to a rise in domestic prices, and that even if wages increase, they may nevertheless lag behind. No honest man could claim that this situation obtains in Palestine. The fact is that the increase in both the real and money wages

of the Arab masses has been tremendous. In the case of real wages (which is the important item in terms of human welfare), social services rendered by both Jewish institutions and individuals to the poorer classes of Arabs are sufficient justification for the Zionist upbuilding of Palestine.

III

Mr. Stolberg's case is more brilliant and therefore more easily disposed of, though both serve as examples of how Marxism can degenerate into becoming an "open sesame." The formula is simple. Become a Marxist, and then it will be possible to argue with great authority and some plausibility on economics, politics, literature, art, the dance, etc. Karl Marx is reputed to have exclaimed, "Thank goodness I am not a Marxist." But Mr. Stolberg writes, "You've guessed it: the answer is Marxism." There *is* a royal road.

It is quite obvious that Mr. Stolberg is fascinated by his own brilliance. He writes, "And it is precisely because of the vitality of early Christianity that pure Judaism, having fulfilled its function of generating this new myth, survived only as a sectarian fixation. It became a cult parading as culture to serve as a role for the militant intolerance of Judeo-Christianity." The following well-known authorities on Jewish history apparently agree: Archibald MacLeish, Clifton Fadiman, Theodore Dreiser, and Louis M. Hacker; for they all wrote to *The Nation* in glowing praise of Benjamin Stolberg, journalist and critic. After all, it is fundamental to any discussion of the Jewish problem whether Judaism represents a legitimate culture or is just a "cult parading" as culture. His journalistic bleachers might not have appreciated the fact, but Mr. Stolberg was defining his terms.

In the above quotation he made the following error: to speak of "pure Judaism" is pure nonsense. There never has been a universally accepted creed of Judaism. Even the Thirteen Principles of the Faith, of Maimonides, never enjoyed that prestige and no one was ever as nearly successful as Maimonides in codifying the Jewish religion. Benjamin Stolberg is in Wonderland when he writes that Judaism "survived only as a sectarian fixation." Since the birth of Christianity, Judaism passed through several stages of brilliant creativity.

Which brings us to the point about the historical function of post-biblical Judaism "to serve as a foil for the militant intolerance of Judeo-Chrisianity." This, of course, is the height of provincialism. Mr. Stolberg apparently learned his history from the Protestant scholars who teach that Europe and civilization are synonymous, and that with the disappearance of Roman culture from the Italian peninsula, the world sank into the oblivion of the Dark Ages; that it was only with the emergence of the Protestant revolt that the most glorious age of civilization developed. Thus we must study Medieval Europe as an uninspiring prelude to Modern Europe and all else is beyond the pale.

Now, if one wants to ignore the history of the Jews in Babylon, Alexandria and Spain, one might argue superficially and with some assurance that Judaism "became a cult parading as culture." However, it would also be necessary to proceed with considerable venom, as does Mr. Stolberg, to defend this thesis. He assigns to Judaism an historical role that is not only specious, intellectually, but is geographically fantastic. How could Judaism have served merely as the "foil for the militant intolerance of Judeo-Christianity" if, for over a thousand years, the great centers of Jewish culture were beyond the confines of the Christian world?

Another remark by Mr. Stolberg which exposes his unfamiliarity with the subject on which he generalizes with such dazzle and assurance, is as follows: "The dispersion broke up the physical cohesion of this (ancient) culture. It no longer had a geographical home. It no longer had a demographical base. A closed commun-

ity became a universal diffusion." This vulgarization of Jewish history is passed off as an authentic analysis. Firstly, the period from the Babylonian exile to the sacking of Jerusalem by the legions of Imperial Rome was longer than the history of modern Europe. Since the fifth century before the Common Era communities of Jews have always lived in *galut*. Many authorities even maintain that the largest portion of Jewry never resided within the borders of Palestine after the collapse of the first Jewish commonwealth. Secondly, the Roman conquest of Palestine did not immediately result in a complete exile for all Jews. The homeland remained an important intellectual center for world Jewry for many centuries. Thirdly, during all this period of nearly one thousand years, the communities of Jews scattered in all corners of the known world looked to Palestine as their spiritual home. "A closed community" did not suddenly become a "universal diffusion," because the process of dispersion was gradual. Mr. Stolberg has fallen into the common fault of confusing the dramatic, historical crises with the more profound historical movements. He has been fascinated by great events. He has had no eye for subtlety.

Which again brings us to those two abortive sentences, which colorfully portrayed the historical role of Judaism as the "foil" for Christian intolerance. The basic assumption of Mr. Stolberg's analysis is that Judaism "became a cult parading as culture." The many errors, even in the few short sentences quoted, betray his unfitness to characterize Judaism and the Jewish people. This task might with better grace have been left to those who are in a position to evaluate the authenticity of Jewish culture. Surely, Judaism must have been sufficiently rich in content to satisfy many generations of Jews, if it survived for 3500 years. And the mere fact that so many millions of people have found fit to express themselves in Jewish idiom, in many colorful and creative epochs, should be sufficient evidence of the vitality of the Jewish culture. Judaism was prepared for the dispersion of Jewry; that is why the Jewish people have survived. Other nations perished because the loyalty they cultivated was not sufficiently satisfying to withstand the ravages of man and time.

Since Mr. Stolberg does not know of any Jewish culture, except the hocus-pocus and "tantrums" of a cult, it logically follows for him that "to be Jewish is not a secret vice but a social absurdity." For him Jewish culture is largely a racket, run by "professional" Jews, and in order to show his skepticism he puts the word culture in quotation marks. Ahad Ha-Am said that the Jewish problem is the problem of Judaism. From the depths of his nihilism, our critic writes, "The Jewish problem . . . is the sick relation between Jewry and world, a consciousness of social guilt that goes with social war." His argument is all anticipated in his peculiar hypotheses. His imaginative and highly sensational writing earned four pages of space in the leading liberal weekly on the North American continent. Isn't our society wonderfully democratic? Even the man from Mars can lecture us with authority about our world, or the Jews and theirs.

Why devote your life to study when someone might label you "professional," and while Marxism provides a royal road?

The Jewish Teacher and The Jewish Community

By ISRAEL S. CHIPKIN

THE holiest days in the Jewish calendar are dedicated to self-criticism. This criticism applies to the individual as well as to the group. Whatever pangs the conscience of the individual Jew may suffer when he recites the confessional on Yom Kippur, he seeks solace in the fact that this confessional is written in the collective form and applies more to the aggregate sins of the group, the congregation of Israel, than to his own. This may be balm for the conscience of the individual Jew, but there is none for the group conscience of the Jewish community. The latter is responsible for the behavior of its individual members as well as for its own sins of omission and commission as a group. Be it organized or unorganized, be it called congregation or community, its leaders, appointed or unappointed, professional or laymen, are held to account, justly or unjustly, both by Jews and non-Jews, for the sins of the group. It may not be considered improper, therefore, in this season, to call attention to a sin frequently committed by Jews as individuals or as a group, for which we ask forgiveness and promise to atone during the coming year. It is the sin referred to in the confessional as "the sin of the spoken word," or "lip service"—the sin of boastfulness.

Jewish Education—Tradition or Legend

From the pulpit or platform, and in private conversation, we frequently hear the boastful reference to the Jew as belonging to the "People of the Book," and to the great esteem in which *education* has been held by Jews from biblical days to our very own. We are told how the Jew survived through Jewish education, and how his future depends upon it. The speaker usually documents his references with the customary quotations from "The Book" and the Sages who preserved it. For example: "And thou shalt teach them to thy children and thy children's children" Deut. VI, 7; Deut. IV, 9). "The duty of studying the Torah rests upon every Jew whether he be rich or poor, in sound health or an invalid, young or old" (Yore Deah, 246:1). "A city without a teacher should be put under a ban until the inhabitants of the city appoint one." (Yore Deah, 245:7). "The sanctity of the house of learning is greater than that of the synagogue" (Yore Deah, 246:17). "In the case of the conflict of duties, studying the Torah takes precedence over the duty of honoring parents." (Yore Deah, 240:13). "Let the reverence for thy teacher be unto thee like the reverence for Providence" (Ethics of the Fathers, IV:15). "Anyone who treats the learned with contempt has no share in the world to come" (Yore Deah, 243:6). These quotations are indeed impressive, as are the figures concerning the Jewish youth who fill the high schools, colleges, universities and the professions. To what extent, however, do these quotations and the educational activities of our youth truthfully express the Jewish educational tradition and practice in our own day and in our own community? Would we not, upon reflection, be compelled to admit that this noble tradition has become among us like a legend to relate, and that our manner of adherence to this tradition resembles superstitious behavior more than intelligence?

Let us take two tests of the collective conscience of the Jewish community with reference to Jewish education. First, how much Jewish education does the community require of individual Jews and their children? Secondly, how does the community regard the Jewish teacher?

The Attitude Towards Standards in Jewish Education

How much Jewish education is required of a Jew and his child in America? No one knows. For there is no community consciousness or responsibility to set the standards of Jewish knowledge and the measures of obligation required of individual Jews in this country. Individual High School departments of Talmud Torahs, Sunday Schools, Yeshibot and individual training schools for teachers and rabbis may set their own respective standards for admission of students; but there are no generally accepted standards of achievement for the elementary departments of these schools which reach the vast majority of Jewish children.

So far as the adults are concerned it is not incorrect to say that the greater number know very little of "The Book" and its contents, and are not much concerned about "Torah," "Jewish Education" or Jewish living. They may show a measure of interest in Jewish woes and Jewish charities, in the synagogue and in Palestine endeavor; but judging from the attitude of Jewish parents in this country, it would seem that Bar Mizvah or Confirmation is the solemn rite which, when consummated by a "pulpit speech," liberates the Jewish adult from further obligation to Jewish study and *mizvot*.

Jewish education, according to American custom, applies primarily to children under thirteen and above eight or nine years of age, and, for the majority of them, less than one or two years of Jewish schooling. The Talmud Torah pupil may stay longer than the Sunday School pupil, but he learns little more; while the Yeshibah *bahur* is a highly selected pupil and constitutes an insignificant proportion of the Jewish child population.

What Jewish knowledge does the average child acquire in this limited period of Jewish schooling? It is difficult to answer this question with any degree of accuracy because of the failure of the community to demand standards of achievement. Empirically, it would seem that the average child is required to learn how to participate in and read the synagogue services on Sabbath and holidays, to recite certain blessings or prayers on family occasions, to know some stories from the Bible or something of early Jewish history, to know some words or sentences in Hebrew, a few songs, some current events, and to prepare for the Bar Mizvah or confirmation ceremonies.

These low standards reflect in some measure the true esteem in which the Jewish community consciousness holds the Jewish educational tradition. The fact that about seventy-five percent of Jewish children in a community like New York City do receive some Jewish schooling during a brief period of their childhood days bespeaks blind adherence to the Jewish group and its traditions, but the satisfaction with low standards reveals the lack of intelligence in Jewish group life and the failure to understand or appreciate Jewish traditions. Rituals and external symbols are substituted for content, and for tradition, the boast of ancestral glory.

The Attitude Towards the Jewish Teacher

The low standards of Jewish schooling may be attributed by some to the influence of the American environment and the restrictions it places upon the time schedule of the Jewish child. The Jewish community as a group may not, however, escape responsibility for its failure to raise these standards. Its attitude can best be judged in its treatment of the Jewish teacher, who constitutes the most important element in the Jewish school. In the light of what has happened to him during the past six years, the question may even be raised whether there is any room or need in local Jewish community life for the trained teacher. Instead of raising his qualifications, have not those in control of Hebrew religious schools really been seeking a teacher with inferior qualifications? The establishment of training schools and of a Board of License would seem to indicate a desire on the part of

the more intelligent elements in the community to advance the standards and the status of the Hebrew teacher; but what happens to him when he enters upon his duties in the Hebrew or religious school?

The Task of the Jewish Teacher

The graduate of the Jewish teacher training school, who has spent fifteen years in acquiring Jewish knowledge and, simultaneously, a degree from a secular college or university, comes to his position in the classroom with longing, enthusiasm and high hopes to fulfill a sacred calling. He is in the service of his people, who depend upon him to transmit to the growing generation their traditions and ideals. He has been taught to view his own Jewish knowledge with humility, to continue his Jewish studies and to keep abreast of new Jewish literature and developments in Jewish life here and abroad. He prepares to teach his pupils Jewish history, the Hebrew language, the Bible and other divisions of Jewish literature, Jewish songs and folk lore, Jewish customs and ceremonies, the events of current Jewish life, and their obligations to Jewish community life, home, synagogue and Palestine. His ambition extends further. He hopes to develop the character and personality traits of his pupils, to help them find themselves as Jews and as human beings in a difficult or hostile world, and to contribute to the development of an integrated Jewish community life in America. He is given two or three classes with a total of fifty to seventy-five pupils, is promised a beginner's salary with expectations of an increase; and he is happy.

Then what happens? He finds that his pupils come to him at the end of the day when they are tired. The subject matter he seeks to teach seems more adapted for maturer minds than for children, the text books are inadequate, the range of ages in the grade create method and discipline problems, and of pedagogic guidance there is none. Parents and directors demand fluency in mechanical reading, the knowledge of prayers and blessings, and good discipline. When the year is over he finds that most of his pedagogic dreams have been shattered. What is worse, he begins to question his own status and worth. He finds that principals and directors are not the paragons of Jewish life. He soon discovers, in many cases, that he is only an employee engaged to carry on certain mechanical verbal processes in the classroom, for which he is paid a minimum salary, depending upon the income and debts of the particular institution in which he is engaged. For the same reasons, portions of his salary sometimes remain unpaid. His hopes for economic growth and security vanish in disillusionment.

He compares his lot with that of the public school teacher. He finds that subject matter taught by the latter is easier, the conditions of teaching better. The number of hours of instruction per year is practically the same as his own, but better distributed; in addition, the public school teacher enjoys longer vacations. There is security of tenure, economic advance* and provision for old age. To improve his lot he has a choice of two alternatives: to leave the profession or to organize with his colleagues for its improvement.

The Attitude of Lay Leadership

Both of these alternatives have been exercised. With what results? Some of the better prepared and more promising teachers have left the profession. Others have been replaced by less prepared and inferior personalities at lower salaries. Those who remained in the profession to organize in order to preserve and improve standards have come into frequent conflict with institutional leadershp.

What has been the attitude of institu-

* A teacher in the public elementary school in New York City begins with a salary of $1,608 per year, receives annual increases of $132 until he reaches a maximum of $3,390. There is no accepted scale of salaries for the Hebrew teacher in New York City. In 1935 the average salary amounted to $1,300. According to the teacher union scale, he should receive for a twenty-hour schedule $1,200 to begin with, and at the end of nine years $2,000 per year.

tional boards and individual leaders towards these teachers? A few selected incidents from New York City experience will help to portray it.

In one school, the Board accumulated a heavy debt to the teachers over a year's time. They rewarded the teachers by going into bankruptcy and incorporating under a new name. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case. A number of congregations relieved themselves of their responsibilities to their teachers by handing over to them the management of their affiliated schools. In some cases they exacted certain rental and operating charges from the teachers; in others they promised to pay them for several members' children, but failed to do so. In some instances, congregations utilized income for instruction purposes to pay mortgage debts or synagogue obligations, and postponed the payment of teachers' salaries.

Other more legitimate ways have been used by some Boards of schools and congregations to solve their financial problems. Salaries have been reduced as much as fifty or sixty percent. Additional classes have been given to a teacher by reducing the number of hours of instruction given to each class; or the school has been placed on a ten month basis, thus saving two months salary. In some instances, where teachers and their families, facing starvation for these months, appealed to the Board against such decisions, they were overruled. When they appealed to a rabbinical committee for help, the local rabbi objected; when they appealed to community leaders, the local Board officials resented such behavior. Sometimes appeals did help.

There were instances where congregational officers threatened to discharge teachers who insisted on being paid salary arrears. When teachers resorted to organized efforts to protect their interests, some Boards or individual leaders refused arbitration and resorted to lock-out methods, yielding only after teachers' picketing and after public appeals brought outside intervention. Even then, vengeful and punitive measures against teachers and their leaders were insisted upon before peace and reasonable standards could be introduced.

Directors of some institutions could not see why teachers should be dissatisfied with salaries offered them, when their positions constituted only part time jobs, and they were free the rest of the time to engage in other occupations. The president of one institution was quite puzzled when he was told by his principal that he must use his free time, not only to correct pupils' papers, but to prepare his lessons for teaching, and for personal study. The president wanted to know whether this principal had not completed his studies and preparations before being graduated from his training school.

We spoke above of the sin of "lip service" mentioned in the confessional on Yom Kippur. In the light of the incidents cited above, should we not also add the sins of "the breaking of promises" and "the flippant attitude towards responsibility?"

The fact that many of these incidents took place in congregational schools has caused great disappointment to teachers, for it proved first, the helplessness of rabbis to prevent unfair treatment of the teacher; and second, the failure of the neighborhood community of Jews, as represented in the local congregational organization, to rise to an appreciation of their local responsibility for Jewish education. In contrast to the moral breakdown of neighborhood communities may be cited the comparatively fairer and more stable conditions prevailing in nearly all the institutions supported and supervised by central community agencies in New York City and elsewhere.

Community Responsibility

What may we learn from the facts and discussion thus far? First, that as a community we have been unfaithful to the tradition of Jewish education. Secondly, the only hope for atonement or improvement rests in greater community consciousness and organization. So long as individual institutions and neighbor-

hood organizations set their own standards of conduct and achievement, the standard of Jewish education must be low—or there may be no standards at all. Education without standards of knowledge and behavior is inconceivable. Whatever progress in standards has been made in our local institutions has been largely influenced by central community efforts.

Shall we assume that Jews in America favor superficial Jewish knowledge and inferior Jewish teachers for their children? Or shall we assume that what is needed are better schedule and program for the Jewish school and for the Jewish teacher? Only organized, cooperative group effort can provide the necessary moral forces and material resources to effect these changes. Without attempting to discuss school schedule and curriculum, it is reasonable to expect that changes in them may not be effected without improving the qualifications and status of the teacher. The community must provide not only training schools for Jewish teachers, but also professional encouragement and security. When chaos and irresponsibility are removed in Jewish communal endeavor, understanding and cooperation are promoted between lay leadership and professional service in Jewish education. Joint discussion and planning by community leadership and teachers' organizations can produce a publicly recognized code of practice, scale of salaries, system of insurance, and standing arbitration committees which constitute the elements of a system of law and order in Jewish educational activity. Such cooperative efforts can do even more. They can gradually produce the necessary changes in the functions of the teacher and in the attitudes of leaders and parents.

Changing Functions and Attitudes

Reference has already been made to manifest changes required in the Hebrew school schedule and curriculum. If the Hebrew school is to reduce its schedule so that it becomes a three or four-day-a-week school meeting ten months a year, the Jewish child must be reached educationally outside the classroom schedule. The Jewish teacher must become more versatile in his abilities, and must assume duties outside the classroom, especially in extra-curricular activities and in the summer camp. A new area of service in which he may become an important factor is the Jewish home. He may have to assume responsibility for Judaizing the Jewish home and guiding the mother in the Jewish education of her children at home.

The Jewish parent, on the other hand, especially the mother, will have to acquire new attitudes and habits with reference to Jewish education. Jewish adults will have to restore the tradition of Jewish education to Jewish life by engaging in some measure of Jewish reading and study themselves. The beginnings of adult Jewish study are already to be noted in a number of American Jewish communities. In addition, Jewish adults will have to assume a greater measure of financial responsibility for the Jewish education of their children. While the poor must be cared for by all, Jewish parents cannot escape their due and decent share of responsibility for the costs of the Jewish instruction of their own children.

The community leader, too, will have to assume new attitudes towards his own communal responsibilities. Adult Jewish study would apply to him as to the parent. He must invite the latter to share in the planning and in the responsibilities for the conduct of the local school. He must learn to keep the promises and obligations undertaken to teachers and to respect them as representatives of Jewish learning and ideals. He must join community efforts to introduce centralized supervision and to raise the standards of teaching and achievement in the local school as well as in all Jewish schools.

Finally, there is need for a change of attitude on the part of the local congregation. It is not an isolated organization and does not operate in a vacuum. It is the local unit of the total community. Its interests and responsibilities are rooted in *K'lal Yisrael,* the community of

Israel. The local school is not merely an adjunct of the local congregation. It is a community school, for which the local congregation or community unit assumes community responsibility. It is part of a system of Jewish elementary and secondary schools. Because the congregation enjoys the benefits of family affiliation, community status and the spiritual leadership of a rabbi, its responsibilities are greater and its standards of conduct and achievement should be higher.

Upon the rabbi in particular devolves the burden of leadership. He is a teacher, a communal leader, and the standard bearer of spiritual values in Jewish life. He in particular should be a friend of the teaching profession, demanding of it and for it, higher standards. He cannot remain faithful to his calling if he permits the teacher to be treated with contempt or with indifference. Certainly it would be preposterous to treat him as a rival and drive him out of his position and deprive him of his function in Jewish community life. The rabbi knows the regard of Jewish tradition for the Jewish teacher. He must help restore this tradition to its place in Jewish life.

Conclusion

On the other hand, the Jewish community must make it possible for the rabbi to exercise his functions in the congregation and in the community. The character of the Jewish community will be judged by its educational standards and the quality of its leadership. "The character of the priest reflects the character of the people." In these solemn days of confession and reflection, let Jewish leadership remember the tradition of Jewish education and not merely some quotations about it. Let the Jewish community remember the rabbi and the Jewish teacher.

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